

EXIT NO. 1214

BY ELIAS LISLE

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My acquaintance with No. 1214 began in Phil Casey's court. Handball is the most democratic sport in the world. One day No. 1214 and I found ourselves pitted as partners against a judge of the supreme court and a lightweight prizefighter, and although his honor played a pretty rough game we beat them by a close score; so close was it, in fact, that a spirit of rivalry was engendered which established our competition as a regular Saturday afternoon event thereafter. Later I met 1214 on his beat on the big bridge, and when I was kept late in my office that spring I would walk across for the sake of the talk with my big police friend. A master of hand, eye and temper I already knew him to be; now I came to know him as a poet in the rough, beset with longings and emotions which he did not himself understand. The sight of the full rigged ships, inbound with all sails set or outbound for the great unknown world, stirred the very soul of him.

"Will ye look at her now, walkin' like a great lady an' with the shape of one!" he would cry, with a kindling eye to the curve of the full bosomed sails. "An' where might she be bound, I dunno? But it's well I'd like to go with her."

"And leave your place on the force?" I asked.

"An' I'll be doin' it one of these days. Why not? I have no wife nor family an' a tidy sum in the bank."

"And where will you go then?"

"Ah, where? That's a thing no man knows, myself least of all."

One Friday evening as I was walking across with the big policeman the talk suddenly shifted from the mor-

"Sure, I think the judge plays a little overboard for his point," No. 1214 had been saying; "that backbender he took me over the jaw, now, an' he just reachin' for the ball. A referee wud ha' called a hinder on him. Accidental! Sure, don't I know that his honor is too much of a gentleman—Whisht! What's that, now?" he interrupted himself as a dark shadow shot in front of us.

"A night hawk out collecting insects," said I.

"Is it, now? I think witches was invited when the first Irishman clapped on to one of them birds. Do ye think, sir?" he spoke diffidently and after a pause—"that there is anything in this belief that we was once some kind of animal or creature?"

"It is a very old belief, John," said I.

"Thin, if there's a breath of truth in it I think I was some creature that flew before I was born this time to be a policeman. There's times, sir, when I'll be byant by the rail there an' I'll be lookin' an' longin' an' longin' an' lookin' till I could leap out to take my chances with the sea birds there."

With such vehemence did he speak that I was disturbed. "Why, John," said I, "you'd do well to ask for a transfer. Gazing down a hundred odd feet till you want to leap isn't a safe diversion."

"An' ye needn't to be worryin' about that, sir, thank ye," said he quietly. "I'll not take the jump—no before the birds tache me to fly."

"We'll need to be in our best trim for them tomorrow afternoon," said I as he turned back to his beat. "So keep your head steady, John."

When I reached the court on the following afternoon, I found the light-weight, who rejoiced in the cognomen of Bunt Habno, serving long ones into the left hand rear corner, which was the supreme court's weakest point. No. 1214 did not appear, and I had to pick up a recruit, whereby the bench and the ring won a hollow victory. On the following morning the newspapers printed paragraphs to the effect that Patrolman John Hannerty was missing, and the evening papers exploited it into a mystery. It seems that the officer had disappeared from his beat on the bridge. That he did not leave at either end seemed certain, for he would have had to pass several brother officers. At 11:55 he had been seen near the railing; at three minutes after midnight he had gone, leaving neither trace or clue. There seemed to be but one inference, and five evening papers printed pictures of the alleged suicide which were chiefly remarkable from the fact that no two of them were in the faintest degree alike. What little element of mystery there was left was considered to be destroyed by the washing ashore of a policeman's coat and trousers on the following morning. That evening the mystery had a sudden revival, for police badge No. 1214 reached the bridge police station by mail. Detective work, amateur and professional, got no further than the fact that the badge had been mailed in a plain white envelope in a mailbox near the water front. Theories were advanced, refuted, defended and replaced by new theories until some never matter came to occupy the public's avid mind.

At the handball court No. 1214 was not forgotten, and in many a hard fought contest with his honor and Bunt I missed his quick eye and indestructible hands, for he had few equals at the sport. One day nearly six months after his disappearance, when the judge and I were arguing a point single handed while awaiting Bunt and a fourth man, there burst in abruptly a sailorman in bad repair. So

close behind him as to suggest a violent, propulsive force came the prize-fighter.

"He didn't come when I foist ast him," panted Bunt, "so I had to jolt up his manners," indicating a cut lip and a badly banged eye which the visitor was ruefully rubbing. "I caught him down here on the river front. He was tellin' about Johnny Hannerty. Speak up, ye dago Swede, or I'll hand yer another."

"I dunno about no Johnny Hannerty," said the sailor doggedly, but with an eye to Bunt's twitching left. "I was tellin' some mates about a crazy man what flew aboard the Giovanna."

"Wait a moment," interrupted the judge. "Let us get this straight. What did you say he did?"

"He said he flew aboard," said the sailor. "I dunno if he spoke true. I never seen him fly, but I dunno no other way he could have got aboard."

"Tell the rest of it—tell the rest of it, or I'll tear yer ear off!" vociferated the ferocious Bunt.

"Hahno," said his honor quietly, "order a drink for our seafaring friend, please, and let him spin his yarn uninterrupted."

Being refreshed, the sailor proceeded with a better grace. "We'd passed under the bridge about midnight, on our way out, last April fools' day. 'Twas a high tide, for we just scraped under with our maintop gallant mast down. It was my watch on deck. We was just gettin' into the bay when I see a man comin' down the mainmast ratlines. He wasn't no man we'd shipped an' he didn't have no clothes, only shirt an' drawers an' shoes. I was mighty surprised, an' so was the mate. He up to hit the man, but the other feller let him have it, an' the mate didn't wake up for near an hour. He hit a queer blow—kinder like this." And the sailor gave a very fair imitation of the driving blow peculiar to handball players and a thing to keep out the way of.

"Then he done a queer thing. Our tug was just puttin' back. He walked to the rail an' threw over a little white package to the tug. 'Mall that where it belongs, will ye?' he calls, an' I goes down after the crew."

"That was the badge!" I exclaimed.

"But there is very slim proof that this was No. 1214," objected his honor.

"Tell him about the scrap; tell it just like you told it before," cried Bunt.

"Wait till you hear that, judge."

"Oh, the fight," said the sailor. "He done his best. It took near the hull crew to get him in irons. I got a cracked rib from it." And he rubbed his side.

"A short left jolt, wasn't it?" cried Bunt.

"I guess it was. Anyhow, it was when I was up close an' it finished me. He hit awful quick an' awful hard an' every time he landed he blazed between his teeth like a snake."

"John Hannerty, by heavens!" chorused the three of us (except that Bunt put it a little stronger), for there was no mistaking that blazing expulsion of the breath which followed every one of No. 1214's most effective drives.

"But how on earth could he have got aboard when he was on the bridge five minutes before midnight?" demanded the judge.

"Said he flew aboard like a bird," asserted the sailor positively. "Never seen him fly, but he must ha' got there somehow."

"May it please the court," I said, "I can clear this mystery. Here was the Giovanna going out into the world, and there on the bridge was No. 1214 with a soul full of yearning. It was only a step from the bridge roadway to the ship's maintop masthead. The soul full of yearning gets the best of 1214 and he makes the step, casts away his uniform and becomes a mysterious disappearance."

"But what has become of him?" asked the judge.

"Quit us at Bonos Airs," said the sailor. "Found a lot of dagoes there battin' a little baseball round a room with their hands. Went in an' played one of 'em, then two of 'em, then three of 'em, an' got all their money. When we sailed, he was fixin' up a place of his own, an' said he'd be an alderman in six months if they had 'em there."

"That is No. 1214 beyond reasonable doubt," said the judge. "Shall we report the matter?"

"Nit," said Bunt. "He might want to git back his job on the police some day."

So we held our peace, and on the police records No. 1214 is still down as missing.

Tried Them on the Indians.

"When I was out in Oregon, fifty-three years ago," said a pleasant looking farmer, who has been in the red raspberry business for twenty-five years, "I first saw red raspberries growing wild in the thickets and along the edges of the wild Oregon roads. They were saucer shaped and not so deep as the modern berry, just like those which still grow wild in Michigan. As the Oregon berries looked tempting I picked a lot in my hat, but did not dare to eat them, as I did not know whether they were poisonous or not."

"On my way back to camp I met a number of Indians whom I had seen before and knew to be friendly; in fact, they had taken such a fancy to me that they once offered to adopt me into the tribe. To these genial Indians I presented my hatful of fresh red raspberries, and my joy was great when they ate them all with relish. After that I ate all I wanted."

"In old New England, I understand, they used to call the raspberry the 'thimbleberry' on account of its resemblance to a woman's thimble."—Detroit Free Press.

A Matter of Sex.

"Does your parrot talk?"

"No; it's a male."—Philadelphia Bulletin.

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Censure For an Officer Who Saved Money For the War Office.

A zealous young officer in South Africa who had a knowledge and love of farming made his men collect oats which fell lavishly by the wayside as columns after columns carrying out hay passed up country. He plowed some land, sowed his oats and eventually reaped his harvest. This harvest, which was a heavy one, saved the country at least £2,000. But when his accounts were sent home the officials at the war office could not understand how they had come by something for nothing. Such a thing had never happened before. They impugned his motives and accounts, and the least of the charges brought against him in a long correspondence was that he had looted the oats. Months passed, and still the young officer had not been able to convince the war office that he was honest. Then a well known general intervened and testified that he himself had watched the experiment in farming by which the country had been saved a considerable sum of money. At last the war office ended the correspondence. Nothing that had been insinuated was withdrawn, although nothing was pressed further. The officer is left with the correspondence on his hands, and any one reading it could not hesitate to pronounce it as being in effect a severe censure.—Manchester Guardian.

THE QUEER MOROS.

Some of the Peculiarities of This Left Handed People.

To judge Moros by inflexible occidental standards of motives and morals is to lose at once the key to the situation. The very structure of their language differentiates them from ourselves. Verbs are in the passive voice. The man who was slashed and killed provoked the trouble. The under dog in the fight is always the aggressor. The thief is not blamed for "finding" things lying about at loose ends; the man who lost the property is the real criminal—besides, he is a fool. If he were a sensible man he would have exercised vigilance against the approach of the thief. Moros reverse everything. Like all orientals, they venerate the past and their folklore; myths and legends abound in tales not unlike those of the "Arabian Nights" Entertainment.

They turn to the left of the road, extend the left hand naturally in greeting, and the scribes write from right to left, turning the paper sideways, as any left handed man would do.

A witty officer explained that the preference for the left was due to the desire to keep the right hand free in the event a stranger should need something done to him. The "explanation" may not be far from the truth.—Chaplain C. C. Bateman in Journal of the Military Service Institution.

Butter as Medicine.

Butter is so common a commodity that people use it and scarcely ever think what wonderful value lies at their hands in the pots of dairy yellow cream fat. But this delicate fat is as valuable as the dearest cod liver oil for the weakly, thin people, and doctors have frequently recommended the eating of many thin slices of bread thickly spread with butter as a means of pleasantly taking into the bodily tissues one of the purest forms of fat it is possible to get. Butter is a carbon, and all excess of it is stored up as fat in the body. It gives energy and power to work to those who eat heartily of it; so it is not economy at all to spare the butter even to the healthy folk.

Finger Nails and Disease.

It is interesting to watch the history of a case of disease as recorded upon the finger nails. When we look at the patient's nails, we see on each of them a distinct ridge, showing that the portion of the nail which has grown since the acute attack is much thinned out. If a person has broken his arm within eighteen months, the ridges on the nails of the hand of the affected arm may be seen, while they will be absent on the other hand. The more acute the illness the sharper will be the ridge. Extreme anxiety and mental depression have the same effect on the nails as physical disease.

The Friendship of Youth.

"Two boys brought up together sometimes remain fast friends for life, but not so commonly as one might suppose. 'I thought you had a little friend with you today, Tommy,' said a lady to a child who was walking about alone and disconsolate. 'I have a little friend, but I hate him!' was the reply. And the words contain a whole essay of comment upon the value of friendship founded solely upon propinquity.—London Spectator.

His Excuse.

"How dare you, sir?" exclaimed the indignant girl.
"I couldn't help it, Maud," pleaded the now penitent young man. "You were so maddeningly kissable!"
Still, it was fully ten seconds before she quite forgave him.—Chicago Tribune.

Connubial Bliss.

Brother—I trust that you are happy with your husband, Maud?
Oh, yes, as happy as one can expect to be with a man who is talking of himself half the time and of his first wife the other half.

His Impression.

"Of course you believe that polygamy is wrong," said the man who was discussing the Mormon question.
"My dear sir," answered Mr. Meekton, "it is not only wrong. It's fool-hardy."—Washington Star.

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